

**INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL**  
**COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**RECORDER: Barbara Ferreira**

**DATE: March 22, 2001**

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**SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Raymond M. Peterson, M.D., Chair; Patricia Aguiar, DSS; Gwen Aldridge, DADP; Valerie Charlton, M.D., DHS; Arleen Downing, M.D., Walter Olsen, Jr., Ed.D., CDE; Marie Kanne Poulsen, Ph.D., Martha Sanchez, Elaine Fogel Schneider, Ph.D., Cheri Schoenborn, DDS; and Patty Moore, FRC/N-CA

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**Introductions & Announcements:**

ICC members and persons in the audience provided self-introductions. Dr. Peterson announced the resignation of ICC Community Representatives Cindy Venuto, Sharon Gould and Betsy Katz. The sites for the May and July ICC meetings have been switched due to availability of hotel meeting rooms. The May ICC meeting will be held at the San Diego Radisson Hotel and the July ICC meeting will be held at the Sacramento Radisson Hotel.

**Discussion on Foster Care Issues:**

Pat Aguiar, Chief of the Foster Care Branch and the Department of Social Services' (DSS) representative to the ICC, served as the facilitator for the discussion. She stated that representatives from several state departments met following the last ICC meeting to discuss potential short-term goals regarding foster care. In order for the ICC to have additional information on current foster care activities the presentations today will focus on "What Is Working" within the various organizations involved with foster care.

Ms. Aguiar introduced Sharon Marie Leahy, Public Health Nurse (PHN) in Los Angeles County. Ms. Leahy is one of three supervisors of 30 nurses in the Department of Children and Family Services who act as consultants to the social workers. There are currently 70,000 children in the Foster Care system in Los Angeles County. She stated that Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) exams go directly to the PHNs who also interact with the school nurses and have access to the immunization records. The PHNs assist the social workers in obtaining medical information from hospitals and physicians. The PHNs assist in the development of foster care case plans and address access to health care. Any child in Child Protective Services is eligible for services from the PHNs. If necessary, PHNs can also go to court to obtain medical records and a child's family medical history. A 24-hour hotline is available to allow social workers access to the PHNs. Of the children in foster care in Los Angeles County in fiscal year 1999-2000, 13% were age 0-2, and 34% were age 3-4.

Dr. Mary Lu Hickman of DDS introduced Carmen Vasquez, Early Start Supervisor at the East Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC). Ms. Vasquez stated she is concerned that the children in foster care requiring early intervention services may not be appropriately referred for Early Start services. Only 23 of the 750 children on the ELACRC's Early Start caseload are also in the foster care system. ELARC has 15 Early Start service coordinators. The service coordinators have provided training for judges involved in children's foster care court cases

with the assistance from their DDS Liaison. All new service coordinators at ELACRC are required to attend 60 hours of training. ELACRC's IFSPs address all programs involved with the child. Ms. Vasquez indicated that they are looking at their 1994 interagency agreement with the local social service agency. The agreement needs revisions to allow for the development of better relationships and understanding of responsibilities.

Gwen Aldridge of DADP introduced Kathryn Isenhowe, Ph.D., Director, Shields For Families, Inc. Shields three programs, Genesis, Exodus and Eden, provide perinatal drug treatment for parents with child development screenings and comprehensive assessments available onsite if needed. Program staff provide intervention and training for parents in the program. Dr. Isenhowe estimated that eighty percent of the children in foster care have parents with substance abuse conditions. Of these, 90-95% are involved with children services. Their program facilitates a reunification process with parents in substance abuse programs. They work closely with the regional center and make referrals. In 1998, 1,200 babies with drug exposure were born at Drew King Hospital. The number has now dropped to 250 births with drug exposure.

Ms. Aguiar stated that DSS is moving away from being viewed as the agency taking children out of homes to the agency supporting families. They anticipate legislation to be introduced that addresses the caseloads of social workers in foster care. She also said the feedback from the ICC discussions on foster care have been very beneficial to her Department.

### **Future Agenda**

The next COTW meeting will continue the discussion of foster care. The issues needing further discussion include:

- Surrogate parent issues
- Role of local Health Department in evaluation and assessment
- Mental health assessments
- Making and receiving Early Start referrals
- Accessing health care services
- San Diego's foster care activities